

CHAPTER 4: PARKS AND RECREATION

Comment:	Staff Response:
<p>Received on: 07/12/06 Received from: Bob Gross Received via: Open House</p> <p>I believe that bike paths should be emphasized in the Parks & Recreation section as much as in the Transportation section. In most parts of the USA, bike paths are considered linear parks and are used primarily for recreation. In a county such as Flathead with tourism as important as it is, bike paths emphasis should be encouraged. If policies such as P.24.1 and P.24.2 were included in the recreation section, it would emphasize to recreation policy makers such as park boards that bike paths, linear parks should be included in new and existing developments.</p>	<p>Page 47, add to paragraph 2: Convenient access to bicycle/pedestrian paths and lanes are important facilities in a community that wishes to pursue healthful living. For more on paths and access to linear parks, please see Chapter 6: Transportation.</p> <p>Add Policy P.17.6: <i>Create a Flathead County Bicycle Transportation Commission to determine and prioritize areas for bike path easement acquisition and construction, prioritize use of funds, guide grant applications, identify roads that should have bicycle lanes, determine maintenance funding mechanisms, and set county-wide bicycle path/lane construction standards.</i></p>
<p>I agree with the important goals and policies proposed in the new draft growth policy that encourage adequate infrastructure and services. Please also identify and carry forward important policies from the 1987 current Growth Policy. Parks and trails and access to public lands are an important part of Flathead County's infrastructure. Diverse funding sources including impact fees should be developed to meet the growing demand for trails, water access sites and regional parks and facilities.</p>	<p>Covered in Chapter 4 – Parks and Recreation.</p>
<p>Chapter 4, Table 4.4 (Draft page 50) – Whitefish State Trust Lands are not currently a formal recreation area, and MT FWP is not the managing agency for the 13,000 acres around Whitefish. DNRC is. Please remove this reference from the table.</p>	<p>Changes will be made to delete the reference.</p>
<p>Pg 45 Policy P.17.2 refers to a minimum County Park size of 5 acres to be “optimal”. This size requirement is too large, when considering minor or small subdivisions on a relatively small amount of acreage. State law is substantially different than the way this is worded. State law currently uses a graduated scale of fees or dedicated land which is based on the unimproved value of the land to be subdivided for residential purposes and lot size on a per subdivision basis.</p>	<p>Staff feels that this policy is acceptable. No change suggested. However, staff suggests adding an additional policy: <i>“Policy 18.3 Support “pocket parks” which are owned and maintained by Home Owner groups and Associations.”</i></p>

<p>p.45: Suddenly, in this Parks and Recreation section (a new author, I would guess?) we have proactive wording: “Acquisition should occur”; “park requirements”; “provide new lands”...a breath of fresh air (no pun intended). Even quantitative goals (on page 52)! This is an excellent section.</p>	<p>Thank-you.</p>
<p>Chapter 4 Parks and Recreation We believe this section of the document is too general in nature. There are no implementation timelines or details about methods or criteria that would be used to achieve the principles. There are no specific funding scenarios for acquisition or maintenance of recreation sites and facilities. There are few specific recommendation of partnerships between Flathead County and other agencies or NGOs.</p> <p>There is an emphasis on acquiring new river and lake access, which is important, but the chapter largely ignores the need to maintain and possibly increase access to other public lands for hunting, trails, and other dispersed recreation opportunities. In fact, dispersed recreation and how to enhance it is missing in this chapter.</p> <p>Table 4.4 is incomplete. Here are a few omissions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flathead River FAS 44 acres • Pressentine FAS 11 acres • Horseshoe Lk FAS 23 acres • Kokanee Bend FAS 185 acres • Lone Pine State Park 229 acres • Old Steel Bridge FAS 128 acres • Sportsman Bridge FAS 6 acres 	<p>See Policy 17.5 and G.18, page 46. The details regarding specific parks planning and operations should be part of a comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan.</p> <p>See Chapter 2 Revision Policy 17.6. Staff suggests adding new policy to Goal 17: <i>“Flathead County should preserve access to public lands by acquiring necessary land, easements, or rights of way. Such acquisition should occur after the identification and prioritization of needed access by the park board.”</i></p> <p>Add Lone Pine because it is a major facility. Others are minor and specialized.</p>
<p>P.17.2 “Parks of no less than 5 acres. That seems excessive.</p>	<p>Staff feels that this policy is acceptable. No change suggested.</p>
<p>Again, this chapter needs to recognize the existing recreational opportunities that currently exist due to the proportionally high public ownership in the county. Where in the nation do you have such convenient access to wilderness, national forests, and national parks like Flathead County? It should be a priority to identify only those critical park needs on private lands so solutions can be focused on those critical needs. For example, identify where improved access is appropriate to local lakes and seek strategies to achieve those access needs. The same would apply to trail heads, etc.</p> <p>Part 4 of this chapter recognizes neither the value of the public lands for recreation nor the added value of parks dedicated pursuant to subdivision approvals.</p>	<p>See G.17 and P.17.1.</p> <p>Prioritizing the implementation methods in the 2006 Growth Policy will be strongly determined by the public and political will and the resources available to the county.</p> <p>Part 4 concerns level of service. See Chapter 4 - Introduction.</p>
<p>In discussion of Parks and Recreation on pages 45 and beyond there is little or no mention of motorized</p>	<p>See Policy P.18.2.</p>

<p>recreational opportunities. Recent Forest Service studies show that over 90% of the recreational days occur in motorized areas. We must begin to plan and provide for motorized off road recreation. It can not be ignored.</p>	
<p>I wish to comment on two aspects of the Draft Policy. First, is Chapter 4 on Parks and Recreation. When most people think of Flathead County recreation the first thing they think of is water. The Draft Policy is correct in interpreting the public need in Policy P.17.1, when it notes an emphasis must be placed on “water-based parks which provide public access to lakes, rivers, and streams.” The comprehensive Park Plan mentioned in P.17.5, should systematically prioritize streams and lakes in the County which have limited or no public access as the TOP PRIORITY.</p> <p>I live within sight of Lake Blaine, yet have no legal means to access the lake. That is the single biggest frustration of those living within my neighborhood. A quasi-legal access along the road right-of-way on the north end of the lake creates parking problems. Significant landowner strife and user clashes occur on an almost daily basis in the summer. I watch the nightly procession of ski boats and jet skis traveling down Van Sant Road as they “compete” for access to the lake. As several major parcels of land in my neighborhood are being sold and subdivided, the new people living in those areas will naturally add to the conflict, while any land-based Park the County might create in the area will sit virtually empty. A progressive Park Plan would dictate that new subdivisions within two miles or more of Lake Blaine and other lakes (e.g., Foy, Echo, etc.) would contribute to a fund to create safe and well-maintained public access to the water. Even a parking area offsite within walking access to the lake would be a big improvement. These sites would be used year-round, by ice skaters, dog walkers, ice fishermen, sunbathers, etc. The level of maintenance and protection of existing water-based parks in the County is poor, and will only decline with greater use. Better coordination and collaboration with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks is a must. Please, make this a high priority!</p>	<p>The Goals and Policies of Chapter 4 address these issues. Prioritizing the implementation methods in the 2006 Growth Policy will be strongly determined by the public and political will and the resources available to the county and should be addressed in a Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan (See Policy 17.5).</p> <p>Staff agrees and issues sufficiently covered in Chapter 4. No change suggested</p>
<p>Parks and Recreation P 17.1 (p. 45). We agree with the stated policy, but would urge even stronger emphasis on acquiring public access to lakes, river, and streams NOW. Such access need not be large, and development of such sites can wait, but acquiring additional public water use access cannot.</p>	<p>The Goals and Policies of Chapter 4 address these issues. Prioritizing the implementation methods in the 2006 Growth Policy will be strongly determined by the public and political will and the resources available to the county.</p>
<p>For purposes of parkland statistics, including city residents in the population per acre totals is important. This is especially applicable to water-based parks because of their intense use, small</p>	<p>See Chapter 2 Revision Policy 17.6. <i>“Flathead County should preserve access to public lands by acquiring necessary land, easements, or rights of way. Such acquisition should occur after the</i></p>

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<p>the Long Range Planning Task Force Committee on Natural Resources: Seek to create or maintain public river and lake access points during the subdivision approval process.</p> <p>ADDITIONAL POLICY Adapted from policies submitted to the county planning office and recommended for inclusion in the growth policy by the Long Range Planning Task Force Committee on Natural Resources: Require adequate setbacks for development along river corridors or lakeshores to prevent loss of recreational access and to reduce conflict.</p>	<p>See revised chapter 2 policy 17.6.</p>
<p>Draft Growth Policy 17.4 page 45 PARKS & RECREATION CHAPTER 4: Develop strategies to fund, operate, and maintain new parks and recreational facilities.</p> <p>REPLACEMENT POLICY Adapted from Bozeman Montana 2020 Community Plan Chapter 9 Page 39 Policy 39: Develop and implement reliable and adequate funding mechanisms for the acquisition, development, and maintenance district, general funds, and parkland dedication.</p> <p>ADDITIONAL POLICY Adapted from Bozeman Montana 2020 Community Plan Chapter 9 Page 39 Objective 5: Enhance the community's quality of life through recreational programming and the development of recreational facilities.</p> <p>Draft Growth Policy 17.2 page 45 PARKS AND RECREATION CHAPTER 4: With the exception of water-based parks, subdivision park requirements should be used to create and/or fund dedicated park sites of optimal size of no less than five acres to accommodate operation and maintenance costs.</p> <p>ADDITIONAL POLICY Adapted from Bozeman Montana 2020 Community Plan Chapter 9 Page 38 Policy 6: Devise standards, procedures, and requirements for the preparation, review, and adoption of neighborhood and subdivision park plans.</p> <p>ADDITIONAL POLICY Adapted from Bozeman Montana 2020 Community Plan Chapter 9 Page 38 Policy 57: Revise local subdivision regulations to support off-site parkland dedication or other means of aggregating parkland.</p> <p>ADDITIONAL POLICY Adapted from the 1987 Flathead County Growth Policy Chapter 12 Page 55 Policy 12.11: A greenbelt should be maintained along all streams and rivers in the County to protect the quality of water (reduce erosion; surface runoff containing pesticides, fertilizers, etc.; stream bank depredation/defoliation; etc.) and maintain the natural aesthetics of waterways.</p>	<p>Staff disagrees because Flathead County does not have a park district.</p> <p>Add the following on page 45 in the introduction: <i>"Parks and recreation enhance the community's quality of life."</i></p> <p>Staff disagrees. This is covered in the subdivision regulations.</p> <p>Staff agrees. Suggests adding policy to G.18: <i>During the development process, riparian buffers should be designated along major streams and rivers in the County to enhance recreational opportunities, protect the quality of water (reduce erosion; surface runoff containing pesticides, fertilizers, etc.; stream bank depredation/defoliation; etc.) and maintain the natural aesthetics of waterways.</i></p>
<p>Page 45 Need policy for homeowners parks. Severely need a policy for maintenance of these bike trails that the</p>	<p>Staff agrees and suggests adding an additional policy: <i>"Policy 18.3 Support "pocket parks" which are</i></p>

Planning Board and Commissioners want to make.	<i>owned and maintained by Home Owner groups and Associations."</i>
<p>COMMENTS OF FLATHEAD COUNTY GROWTH POLICY</p> <p>Access to water for recreation:</p> <p>The state of Montana owns the water and it is for use by all Montanans. State and local governments have not met the requirement of the Montana State Constitution and State law to provide access and use of water for all Montanans. The Growth Policy must recognize this omission and address the mandate before land is sold for development.</p> <p>Water rights are more of a state issue, while access to water for recreation is a local issue. I would like to see the County identify sites on lakes and rivers which are the most desirable for public access and plan to acquire them before development takes place. A concrete slab and a trash dumpster would be easy to install and maintain and would provide a means for the general public to access the water they have a right to use for recreation.</p>	See P.17.1
DRAFT GROWTH POLICY: <u>PARKS AND RECREATION CHAPTER 4</u>	
<p>Draft Growth Policy 17.1 Page 45 PARKS AND RECREATION CHAPTER 4</p> <p><i>Acquisition of park and leisure facility sites should occur now to serve the future needs of the county, particularly water-based parks which provide public access to lakes, rivers and streams.</i></p>	
<p><u>RECOMMENDATION:</u> Strengthen proposed Policy 17.1 by adding the following policies beneath Goal 17 in the Parks and Recreation Chapter 4.</p> <p><u>Add (New) Policy:</u> <i>Selection of public park sites should be dependent on public attitudes and opinions, legal and convenient access to the site, closeness to population centers, close proximity to major traffic routes, proximity to adjacent recreational sites, scenic quality, topography appropriate for the use in mind, vegetation and presence of streams or lakes.</i> (from 1987 Flathead County Growth Policy Chapter 12, Page 55, Policy 12.3)</p>	Staff disagrees. No change suggested.
<p><u>Add (New) Policy:</u> <i>Use conservation areas and open lands to define and connect neighborhoods and districts. Distribute a range of public parks -- from tot-lots and village greens to ball fields and community gardens within neighborhoods.</i> (adapted from policies submitted to the county planning office and recommended for inclusion in the growth policy by the Long Range Planning Task Force Committee on Natural Resources)</p>	Staff disagrees. No changes needed.
<p><u>Add (New) Policy:</u> <i>Seek to create or maintain public river and lake access points during the subdivision approval process.</i> (adapted from policies submitted to the county planning office and recommended for</p>	See revised chapter 2 policy 17.6.

inclusion in the growth policy by the Long Range Planning Task Force Committee on Natural Resources)	
Add (New) Policy: <i>Require adequate setbacks for development along river corridors or lakeshores to prevent loss of recreational access and to reduce conflict.</i> (adapted from policies submitted to the county planning office and recommended for inclusion in the growth policy by the Long Range Planning Task Force Committee on Natural Resources)	See revised chapter 2 policy 17.6.
Policy 17.2 Page 45 PARKS AND RECREATION CHAPTER 4 <i>With the exception of water-based parks, subdivision park requirements should be used to create and/or fund dedicated park sites of optimal size of no less than five acres to accommodate operation and maintenance costs.</i>	
RECOMMENDATION: Strengthen Policy 17.2 by retaining the language found in Policy 12.5 of the existing Flathead County Growth Policy.	Staff disagrees. No changes needed.
Add (New) Policy: <i>New developments of three or more units per gross acre should incorporate privately owned and maintained playgrounds or tot-lots into the site design if no other parklands are to be developed or dedicated within the subdivision.</i> (adapted from 1987 Flathead County Growth Policy Chapter 12, Page 55, Policy 12.5)	
Add (New) Policy: <i>Subdivision park requirements shall not be used to create non-public parks limited to home-owner use.</i> (Adapted from 76-3-621. Park dedication requirement)	Staff disagrees. No changes needed.
Policy 17.4 Page 45 PARKS AND RECREATION CHAPTER 4 <i>Develop strategies to fund, operate and maintain new parks and recreational facilities.</i>	
RECOMMENDATION: Add three policies from the 1987 Flathead County Growth Policy to the Parks and Recreation Chapter of the proposed Growth Policy in order to strengthen Policy 17.4.	
Add (New) Policy: <i>Whenever possible, County parks should be developed in conjunction with public or private schools. A further example of sharing could involve the public use of school lands and school facilities (after hours) in exchange for County maintenance.</i> (from 1987 Flathead County Growth Policy Chapter 12, Page 55, Policy 12.12)	Staff agrees. Add new policy to G. 18: “Whenever possible, County parks should be developed in conjunction with public or private schools. A further example of sharing could involve the public use of school lands and school facilities (after hours) in exchange for County maintenance.”
Add (New) Policy: <i>Promote such methods as conservation easements, life estates, and land grants as methods or preserving open space or scenic/critical areas.</i> (from 1987 Flathead County Growth Policy Chapter 12, Page 55, Policy 12.13)	Staff agrees. Add Policy in G. 18 “Promote such methods as voluntary conservation easements, life estates, and land grants as methods or preserving open space or scenic/critical areas.” Also, see Chapter 2 revisions Goals 4 and 9 and accompanying policies.
Add (New) Policy: <i>Flathead County should</i>	This issue is better discussed in Comprehensive Parks

<i>maintain a self-supporting, self-sustaining, year-round recreation program.</i> (from 1987 Flathead County Growth Policy Chapter 12, Page 55, Policy 12.15)	and Recreation Master Plan development process. No change needed.
Policy 17.5 Page 45 PARKS AND RECREATION CHAPTER 4 <i>Prepare a comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan to guide the expansion of the park system to meet the needs and expectations of the growing public.</i>	
Comment: The County should provide a detailed implementation timeline that outlines the methodology behind this process, including: A Community Visioning Process, Level of Service Assessment, Buildable Land Inventory (Residential, Industrial and Commercial), as well as a Land Acquisition Plan.	Thank you for the statement. No change suggested.

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